

# Greens: Plan bad for Great Salt Lake birds

Fourteen groups protest plant-expansion idea; an environmental study is in the works

By PATTY HENETZ  
The Salt Lake Tribune

Environmental organizations are protesting a proposal to open thousands of acres of Great Salt Lake shoreline to a Kansas minerals company that will undergo an environmental study by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The plan would allow Great Salt Lake Minerals Corp. to expand its business on 33,000 acres adjacent to its current site. The Utah Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands already has approved a 10-year lease on the property despite concerns for the lake, one of the globe's most important stops for migratory shorebirds.

The July lease immediately ran into opposition from 14 conservation groups, whose members say the plan would imperil 5 million birds and 250 species that live in or around the lake, including pelicans, gulls, peregrine falcons, Wilson's phalaropes and

## Public meetings

*The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will hold three public meetings before preparing a draft environmental impact study of an expansion proposal by Great Salt Lake Minerals Corp. of Overland, Kan. The minerals company, which makes fertilizer and salt products, wants to expand onto 33,000 acres of Great Salt Lake shoreline in Box Elder County. The meetings will be from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.*

- **Wednesday:** South Davis Junior High School, 298 W. 2600 South, Bountiful
- **Thursday:** Ogden Nature Center, 966 W. 12th Street, Ogden
- **Nov. 14:** Airport Inn Hotel, 2333 W. North Temple, Salt Lake City
- **For more information:** [www.epa.gov/fedrgstr/EPA-IMPACT/2007/November/Day-01/i5437.htm](http://www.epa.gov/fedrgstr/EPA-IMPACT/2007/November/Day-01/i5437.htm)

snowy plovers.

Great Salt Lake Minerals of Overland, Kan., wants to build three solar evaporation ponds on 33,000 acres. The project would include an 8,000-acre pond on the east side of the Great Salt Lake in the Bear River Bay.

The company also would build two new solar ponds on the west side of the lake: an 18,000-acre Dolphin Island expansion pond and a 7,000-acre pond at the southern end of Clyman Bay between the Union Pacific Railway and several existing ponds.

The operations would

require diesel pumps to transport brine. More than 14,000 cubic yards of fill would be discharged into Bear River Bay and Cayman Bay to create dikes. Approval would allow the company to expand its operation to an area the size of Salt Lake City, about 119 square miles, or 7 percent to 13 percent of the lake's surface depending on water-level cycles.

Company spokeswoman Peggy Landon says the corporation plans to spend \$25 million over three years to increase capacity at the plant, which processes sulfate of

potash — an organic potassium fertilizer — into fertilizer. The company also creates salt products and claims the expansion is needed to avoid importing raw potassium from other sources.

The protesting organizations include the Utah Audubon Council, Friends of the Great Salt Lake, Utah chapter of the Sierra Club, League of Women Voters, The Nature Conservancy of Utah, Utah Airboat Association, Utah Rivers Council and Utah Waterfowl Association.

The Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network, a multinational conservation coalition, disputed a Forestry Division statement that the birds would adapt to the expansion.

In a September letter to Department of Natural Resources executive director Mike Styler, Marshall P. Jones, Jr., the Shorebird Reserve Network's hemispheric chairman, said such an assumption defied current scientific understanding of the breeding and ecology of migrant birds.

The Army Corps of Engineers expects to complete a draft EIS by fall 2008.

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